

From: Shore, Debra [Shore.Debra@epa.gov]
Sent: 11/12/2021 6:03:16 PM
To: R5 ALL EPA [R5_ALL_EPA@epa.gov]
CC: R5 ALL NON-EPA [R5_ALL_NONEPA@epa.gov]
Subject: RA's weekly message

Greetings everyone.

I've been thinking about creativity lately, which means I've also been thinking about failure. Why? Carving out space for failure means carving out space for innovation, for trying things out. (Isn't that the scientific method, by the way?) In college, I was fortunate enough to spend three weeks on a winter Outward Bound program in New Hampshire, camping in the Pemigewasset Wilderness, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing with heavy packs on our backs. (It was great preparation, by the way, for surviving winters in Chicago!) One of the group leaders was a grizzled older fellow we called Bull of the Woods and he barked at us, "A mistake is something from which you learn nothing." Clearly, I've carried that with me for many years.

I'm encouraging all of you to carve out space for experiments, for trying out new ideas, for getting outside our comfort zones – because that's how we learn, that's the path to succeed. Know you have an ally and booster in me.

This week started with the exciting news that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal had passed. As Administrator Regan noted in his [email](#) over the weekend, this means an unprecedented boost in funding for some of our most important work: more than \$50 billion for clean water projects (including \$15 billion for lead service line replacements), \$3.5 billion for Superfund cleanups, \$1.5 billion for brownfields, \$5 billion for clean school buses and \$1 billion for Great Lakes. We're all still trying to figure out exactly what this means for the Region and how the programs will be implemented, but it's clear to me that I came to EPA at a propitious time. Now it will be on us to deploy resources wisely and in a way that delivers genuine improvements in the quality of life and environmental health for the people in Region 5 and beyond.

Many of you have been following news of our Agency's efforts to respond to the Benton Harbor drinking water crisis. This week we began collecting samples for a filter efficacy study that will include up to 300 homes. In addition to the many people on-the-ground, the regional lab has been gearing up to support the effort and to analyze samples. Given the magnitude of our response efforts, I have to say that the coordination across the divisions – and across the agency – has been nothing short of impressive. I commend you all on your dedication to this issue.

Strong communication is the foundation to a constructive relationship, and as we partner with tribal nations, we must improve our communications – the way we speak and listen. I had the pleasure this week of giving the opening remarks at the Working Effectively with Tribal Governments training session on "Cultural Intelligence: Language Matters." I shared with everyone that the Region will be adopting new language to describe our management positions: we will change "branch chiefs" to

“branch managers” and “section chiefs” to “section supervisors.” These new terms will help support and foster an inclusive and respectful workplace, and I encourage everyone to start using them now.

On Wednesday I spoke with *Chicago Sun-Times* reporter Brett Chase – my first interview! -- who follows our work closely and had some insightful questions about my goals as regional administrator and the Agency’s progress in restoring health to the Great Lakes ecosystem, responding to climate change, and promoting environmental justice.

I continue to meet many new people in Headquarters and elsewhere, including the new regional administrator from Region 3, Adam Ortiz – and we compared notes on our first couple weeks. Small world fact: Adam and I are both graduates of Goucher College in Baltimore, which means that fully 100 percent of the appointed RAs to date are Goucher alumni. Go Gophers! In addition, I met with our state directors during our monthly meeting. I had already spoken to most of them, but it was great to meet with them together in this collaborative forum.

I was also able to drop into ECAD’s staff meeting. I enjoyed this opportunity to see and virtually meet more of you --learning about the division and its current projects and taking some questions too! I look forward to joining more meetings with the divisions.

I held my first open office hour this week – telephonically this time – and I so appreciated learning about and from a number of you. Starting next week, my open office hour will be recurring on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to noon. Please contact Yvonne Jarmoc at jarmoc.yvonne@epa.gov to set up a 10-minute meeting.

Let me close this weeks’ message by saying that these last few weeks have been a whirlwind, and I feel blessed that there are so many talented, knowledgeable, dedicated folks in the Region that have been so helpful to me. We are coming into a very exciting but also demanding time for this Agency and I very much look forward to all the great work we can do together.

RA Recs:

For your viewing pleasure, let me recommend *The Biggest Little Farm*, a fun and engaging documentary about a city couple who purchased 200 acres of barren, degraded farmland in the foothills of Ventura County and who dreamed of living – and farming – in a way more harmonious with nature. You’ll come away with lessons about stormwater management, soil health, pest control and wishing you had a night vision camera to capture scenes of predators roaming! It’s available on several streaming services and from many public libraries. Send me your favs – I want to stretch too! Stay safe and be well.

Debra Shore

Regional Administrator & Great Lakes National Program Manager

US EPA Region 5

(312) 353-6424 – office

(312) 914-8304 – cell

